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ABSTRACT

This issue explores how competitive intercollegiate athletics affects both admissions practices and the nature of academic community at private colleges and universities that practice selective admission. It is based on a roundtable that took place in February 2003. It is clear that the athletic profile of such selective campuses is considerably different than the culture of high-stakes, big-media collegiate sports at the large, mainly public, universities. Athletic participation on these selective campuses can be seen as preparation for life rather than preparation for work. As the competition intensifies for admission to these institutions, so too does the contention over how athletic ability should figure in the mix of factors that determine which students gain admission from a pool of highly capable and promising applicants. At an earlier age, students in high-aspiration communities come to understand the need to excel in a specific area, to develop a talent that distinguishes them in the competition for admission to the most selective institutions. The subject of athletics has become a focal point for a deeper set of uncertainties within the academy, including the question of what values these institutions seek to foster in their students and learning communities. In all of higher education, there is an uneasy disparity between the drive to academic distinction and athletic prowess. What seems to be missing if not the discussion of athletics per se, but the articulation of the institutional and educational values to provide a context for considering the role that athletics should play and the resources it should command. The college president has the central leadership role in the explorations of these values and the place of college athletics. (SLD)

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When Values Matter

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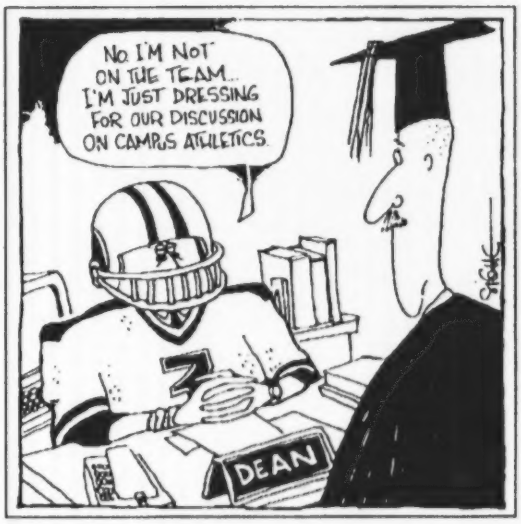

When Values Matter

Intercollegiate athletics is a lens that brings into remarkable focus the relationship of institutional values to daily practices. More than most issues, it has the effect of casting complex and ambiguous disputes into sharp relief. For more than a century now, spectator sports have provided colleges and universities with a host of symbols of common institutional identity and ambition, drawing together otherwise disparate and specialized populations. Many of athletics' most spirited advocates consider the lessons of citizenship and socialization derived from the playing field to be no less important than those of the classroom. In the best sense, participation in collegiate sports becomes a hallmark of the well-rounded student—serious, disciplined, competitive, yet equally exemplifying the virtues of good sportsmanship, team camaraderie, and institutional loyalty. In the pantheon of collegiate aspirations, athletic achievement continues to hold a special place—both for individuals and for institutions.

But as sports have become more intense in every level of society, higher education institutions of all kinds have confronted the question of how well practice in fact follows precept. Within the last three years, the perennial debate about the role of athletics, particularly in highly selective institutions, has become more acute. The questions in these settings center on the academic qualifications and performance of recruited athletes relative to their peers, as well as the degree to which student-athletes gravitate toward a certain limited set of majors, effectively distorting demand on the curriculum and potentially diverting resources from the departments athletes tend to avoid. Within these particular disputes are more fundamental and unresolved questions: Exactly what role does intercollegiate athletics have on college campuses and in the individual athlete's overall education? In an age of increasing competitiveness and specialization, to what extent is participation in a team sport still an extra-curricular activity; and to what extent has it become the central organizing element of the student-athlete's college years? What is the price athletics exacts—in terms of institutional expenditures, or the claims made on students' own educational priorities? And even more particularly: Have the recruitment and admissions practices of selective colleges and universities conferred too strong an advantage on students who are recruited to participate in team sports? Through the years, these questions have been asked in a variety of contexts; in 2001 the publication of *The Game of Life: College Sports and Educational Values*, by James Shulman and William Bowen, helped cast them into sharper relief.

This *Policy Perspectives* explores how competitive intercollegiate athletics affects both admission practices and the nature of academic community at private colleges and universities that practice selective admissions. It is based on a roundtable that took place in February 2003, organized by J. Douglas Toma of the University of Georgia's Institute of Higher Education. Our roundtable included administrators, professors, student-athletes, athletics directors, directors of intercollegiate athletics conferences, and others with experience and insight in considering the role of athletics in campus communities. While the debate about that role is not new, the issue of access to the most selective baccalaureate institutions has taken on a particular prominence in current conversations.

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Defining the Context

Our concern is with the role and impact of intercollegiate athletics in colleges and universities that practice selective admissions and do not award athletic scholarships. This designation includes highly selective liberal arts colleges whose teams play in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division III, and a limited set of private universities in NCAA Division I that do not award athletic scholarships, including the Ivy League and several universities in the Patriot League.

Any discussion of intercollegiate athletics at colleges and universities that practice selective admissions while also fielding robust athletic programs needs to begin by taking stock of some basic facts. One is that the athletic profile of these selective campuses is considerably removed from the culture of high-stakes, big-media collegiate sports in large, mainly public universities. Few of the students who participate in athletics in selective colleges and universities ever expect to become professional athletes. In that sense, athletic participation on these campuses can be seen as preparation for life rather than preparation for work.

By anyone's reckoning, the colleges and universities we describe play a leadership role for all of higher education; they epitomize ideals of academic strength and community to which virtually every four-year institution in the nation aspires. The goals of intercollegiate athletics at these selective institutions may be more closely aligned with their educational missions than would be true at big-time athletics institutions that consciously seek Bowl Championship Series or "Final Four" status. But intercollegiate athletics raises the same kinds of issues in the selective institutions we describe as those voiced in many big-time athletics institutions. Fundamentally, the issues surrounding intercollegiate athletics have to do with the allocation of scarce resources. For colleges and universities of any kind, athletic programs require a substantial investment of funds—a point driven home each time a new budget is put into place. And for those institutions that practice selective admissions but do not offer athletic scholarships, the mounting of broad-based, competitive athletic programs has required an equally explicit investment of a second scarce resource: places in the freshman class. Because athletes comprise a larger proportion of the student body than is true at larger, less selective schools, these institutions must establish the degree to which athletic ability should be a factor in admissions decisions, taking into account that coaches of each sport need the ability to recruit athletes with specific skills in order to field competitively respectable teams.

At universities that offer athletic scholarships, athletic ability is not an admissions issue in the same degree as in smaller, highly selective institutions. The very size of the freshman class in those larger settings makes the proportion of student-athletes comparatively small, and it is unlikely that recruited athletes will displace prospective students who excel in other pursuits. Those who would be student-athletes at larger institutions compete against others for a specified number of athletic scholarships, and it is simply assumed that the best athlete wins, position by position, provided he or she meets the necessary academic qualifications.

Among the smaller, selective institutions represented at our roundtable, however, the student-athlete competes against every other applicant for a limited number of spaces in a freshman class. In these institutions, intercollegiate athletics places much greater pressure on the admissions process itself. As the competition intensifies for admission to these leading institutions, so too does the contention over how athletic ability should figure in the mix of factors that determine which students gain admission from a pool of highly capable and promising applicants. However unintentionally, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 effectively heightened the tension around these issues by requiring institutions that receive federal funds to provide athletic programs for women that are comparable to those for men.

As the competition intensifies for admission to these leading institutions, so too does the contention over how athletic ability should figure in the mix of factors that determine which students gain admission from a pool of highly capable and promising applicants.

Specialization and Early Excellence

One effect of the intensified admissions competition has been to increase the drive toward specialization in students from a very early age. Beginning in the middle or even elementary school years, students in high-aspiration communities come to understand the need to excel in a specific area—to develop a distinctive talent that dis-

tinguishes them in the competition for admission to the most selective colleges and universities. The composition of a freshman class at selective institutions is the result of an increasingly intense national competition for the most capable and promising students—nearly all of whom, it is assumed, demonstrate exceptional ability in at least one particular domain such as science, mathematics, history, music, theater, public service, or in particular sports.

Beginning in the middle or even elementary school years, students in high-aspiration communities come to understand the need to excel in a specific area—to develop a distinctive talent that distinguishes them in the competition for admission to the most selective colleges and universities.

This heightened competition for admission underscores another basic fact which any discussion of intercollegiate athletics at selective institutions must address: athletic competition has itself undergone fundamental change through the past 50 years and particularly in the last two decades. No one understands this alteration better than the college president who must contend with angry alumni and trustees who are convinced that the college is abandoning its athletic traditions. Most of these advocates are successful men and women who have fond memories of playing, sometimes even acquiring, a new sport during their time at college. They likely recall team membership as an integral part of their own undergraduate experience, and they are distressed by what they perceive as attacks on the ability of current students to discover and benefit from athletic competition in college.

What these alumni and trustees seldom realize, however, is the degree to which athletics, like almost everything else, has become a highly specialized endeavor. Playing a sport is not something discovered in one's college years. It is something begun early in childhood, first by choosing a sport and position and then by honing the necessary skills while developing the fortitude and discipline to become truly competitive. Nearly gone are the athletes who excel in several sports at a variety of positions. Gone too is the idea of a sport having a particular season. Maintaining a competitive edge is a year-round endeavor, something an athlete will expect to practice every day. More than ever before, what one does in college is perfect one's skills and draw strength from the camaraderie of being part of a team of similarly motivated and dedicated students—in sports, as in any other field of pursuit.

One lesson that many high school seniors have learned is that success in athletic competition is a proven path to personal success later on. Many stories in the news focus on the student-athlete as would-be athletic professional. An equal number could be written about the student who sees athletic success as the way to gain admission to a selective college or university and to the heightened life opportunities those institutions confer. What is important is to be noticed early so that one can be recruited as a high school senior—or even better as a junior. These young people quickly learn that there is an advantage to being both an athletic and a scholastic achiever.

These developments make clear that students who played football for Amherst, Bucknell, Princeton, or any of the 50 or so institutions that practiced selective admissions in the 1950s were not the same as those who make up the teams today. While members of those earlier squads also played in high school, doing so was less likely to have been a deciding factor in their admission to college. Getting into any of these schools was also simpler back then; it was a smaller cohort of students and parents that was prepared to seek or pay for that kind of education. The student body of these institutions was far more homogeneous than today in terms of socio-economic status, race, and religion; many of these selective colleges and universities were single-sex institutions through most of the twentieth century. There were certainly fewer guidebooks, special admissions professionals, media stories, and national rankings comparing colleges and universities that have made the scramble for admission to a selective institution the hurly-burly it is today.

Difficult Debates

The subject of athletics has in fact become a focal point for a deeper set of uncertainties within the academy, including the preeminent question of what values these institutions seek to foster in their students and their learning communities. Like affirmative action, athletics draws attention both inside and outside the academy to the admissions "tip"—the power to tilt the balance of forces that are otherwise nearly equal, and to shape the incoming class to meet particular objectives of the institution. The questions are being asked not only by prospective students and their parents, but also within institutions themselves: What are the criteria by which these institutions

select their incoming class? Who determines those principles of selection, and how are the decisions made? Do they result from broad campus deliberations of purpose and value in shaping an incoming class? Finally, is the selection process fair to all qualified students, including those with exceptional skills in other areas?

The subject of athletics has in fact become a focal point for a deeper set of uncertainties within the academy, including preeminently the question of what values these institutions seek to foster in their students and their learning communities.

A telling instance of the pressure intercollegiate athletics exerts on admissions occurred in Swarthmore College's decision to eliminate varsity football in December of 2000. The decision was made, not to reduce the proportion of freshman admissions earmarked for athletes, but to allow the college to allocate those places among players in other team sports. In fact, the football team had made real headway in reversing a pattern of losing steadily through the seasons; what became clear over time, however, was the price exacted for such progress in terms of admission slots. In the most general terms, the college realized that maintaining competitiveness in other sports would require a greater number of athletic tips for those sports as well. Simply increasing the total number of spaces earmarked for athletic admits would constrain the college's ability to meet other goals in shaping its freshman class.

Not long afterwards, Williams College—by anyone's accounting a leader in Division III athletics—raised questions about the role of athletics on its own campus. An internal study and report found that athletes had a decisive advantage in the admissions process, and that a strong culture of athletics on campus at times detracted from the college's academic environment. Then, last year the presidents of the Ivy League added a new stipulation to the existing rules that limit practice activity: student-athletes should have a minimum of seven off-season weeks each year with no supervised practice. The ruling was designed to allow these students to meet regular academic obligations, and also to explore other kind of learning experiences and resources on their campuses. Many athletes viewed the decision as an infringement on their ability to choose how to spend their time.

Each of these events—at Swarthmore, Williams, and within the Ivy League—exemplifies the increasingly complicated and difficult debates about the future of collegiate sports within undergraduate institutions that practice selective admissions in pursuit of academic excellence. At these institutions, which receive eight or nine applications on average for every spot in their freshman classes, there is an escalating competition for goods of fixed scarcity: budget dollars; hours spent in pursuit of co-curricular activities; and, what is proving the most contentious resource of all, spaces in the freshman class.

The increased scrutiny of athletics has affected people in all kinds of roles in these selective institutions. Student-athletes often feel a sense of betrayal: heroes on game day as exemplars of the ideal of a college education that stresses achievement and performance, but otherwise undefended against those who would question whether athletes are smart enough to belong in their institutions. Not surprisingly, many of these students feel victimized, denigrated, placed under the microscope. There is a sense of needing to prove themselves academically, of being held to even stricter standards than their classmates from the perception that they were admitted under different and less demanding criteria.

Coaches and athletic directors also feel themselves put on the spot in the current environment, called upon to justify their presence in the learning community. The perception that coaches and athletics exert a disproportionate influence on the admissions process generates charges of misplaced institutional priorities, particularly among faculty who feel their own academic programs are deprived of institutional admissions or financial support. Even those faculty who question the role and importance of athletics in their institutions often feel marginalized simply for having brought up the issue.

In some respects the pressure on coaches in these settings is greater than it is for coaches in institutions that provide athletic scholarships. In any kind of institution, coaches understand that building a winning team depends to a considerable degree on their ability to recruit a certain number of students as athletes. Because these selective institutions do not offer scholarships to students admitted as athletes, coaches have no assurance that team members will play for more than a single season—or, indeed, whether a given student will play at all once admitted.

Winning, Markets, and Values

The questions surrounding athletics—often colored by the particular, some would say peculiar, insularity of highly selective as well as highly expensive institutions—arise today amidst a growing national debate over the excesses of big-time college athletics. Throughout all of higher education there is an uneasy disparity—a lack of resolution between the drive to academic distinction, on the one hand, and to athletic prowess on the other. It is a circumstance that results in institutions trying to look like an ivy institution six days a week, and like a football powerhouse on the seventh.

The fact is, even those selective colleges and universities that are leaders in the academic domain find themselves drawn to an intensified competition—for the best students, for research dollars, for donors, and for prestige. Different as they are from larger public institutions that play big-time athletics, many small selective institutions find themselves being drawn into the same athletic waters as those bigger fish. The performance of athletic teams, in football and basketball as well as in a range of other men's and women's sports, sends a strong market signal about an institution's sense of itself and its ambitions. The concept of loyalty to the college team regardless of its standing may last for awhile, but ultimately no one wants to affiliate with something generally perceived as a losing enterprise. There is nothing like a winning season to rally supporters of the team. An institution that seeks to distinguish itself in the market for students and donors may well perceive that athletic performance becomes analogous to academic strength. In these and myriad other ways, athletics at selective institutions has become central to an intensified process of market competition among institutions generally.

Throughout all of higher education there is an uneasy disparity—a lack of resolution between the drive to academic distinction, on the one hand, and to athletic prowess on the other.

How to account, then, for the rancor that seemingly surrounds the issue today? Hasn't athletics always been an issue, lurking somewhere in the midst of things, ready to ignite and then subside once the moment for demagogy has passed? Perhaps so, but the larger, more interesting question might be: Why, over the past few years in particular, has athletics been the catalyst for a much deeper set of conflicts within the academy? The answer is both simple and complex. The simple answer is that athletics is more easily understood than most aspects of campus life; the questions of budget, winning versus losing, and slots in the freshman class take on a sharpness often lacking in other areas of campus contention. The more complex and important answer is that many colleges and universities have not clearly invoked their core institutional values—the foundations on which to resolve the apparently simple questions of resource allocation that surround athletics as well as other parts of the institution.

Presidential Leadership

One of the most emphatic points made in the Knight Commission's 1991 report on intercollegiate athletics—and reaffirmed in the 2001 report of the second Knight Commission—concerns the critical role of presidents in leading a process of reform. The current contretemps generated by athletics within the nation's most selective colleges and universities demonstrates that presidents are challenged not so much with "fixing athletics" as leading their communities toward an articulation of core values of sufficient clarity that the disputes centering on athletics become resolvable.

There are three kinds of choices presidents have in the current environment:

(1) do nothing;

(2) simply reduce the scale and importance of athletics on campus without any underlying analysis of the roles athletics is supposed to serve; or

(3) convene the discussion of core values, identify the values that are central to the campus community, and make those values the basis of institutional decisions regarding the expenditure of resources, the selection of an incoming class, and the definition of athletics' role in the life of the institution.

On the surface the first of these options might seem the least controversial and therefore most attractive to many presidents. But adherence to the status quo simply allows the current muddle of issues and emotions to persist. Doing nothing would allow and even encourage a continuation of the disputes centering on athletics and its relation to the institution's academic and educational mission. Choosing more of the same would result in continued escalation of emotions, greater confusion in the competition for admission, more public scrutiny and criticism about questions of privilege in the admissions

process, and continuing questions about the allocation of its financial resources.

The second option attempts simply to dispel the controversy about athletics through executive decision. While a presidential decision to reduce the scale of athletics would certainly have an impact on how and where the institution invests its resources, the residual effects of such a decision would only increase the fractures that already exist within a campus community.

We believe it is the third option that offers the most promising path to achieving a better balance. Presidents must take the lead in convening broad, inclusive discussions centered on the core values that unite the college or university as a learning community. For those institutions that have undertaken such discussions, the president's responsibility is to ensure that the values identified are actively engaged in the institution's decision-making process. In reaching a common understanding and affirmation of those values, an institution establishes a foundation for every decision it makes: which goals it will pursue, what activities it will undertake, what human and financial resources it will expend. The crucial missing element on many college and university campuses has not been a discussion of athletics *per se*. What is missing is rather the articulation of institutional and educational values to provide a context for considering the role that athletics should play and the resources it should command. What is needed are discussions that lead to a strong—even if not unanimous—consensus about the institution itself, the values it seeks to foster, and the goals it seeks to achieve.

Convening discussions of this kind inherently carries risk; in many ways it is tantamount to holding a constitutional convention, providing a forum that could draw an array of latent issues into the open. One outcome of such discussions would be to make an institution's admission and selection process transparent in a way that it may not have been before. A president might conceivably fear that one consequence of such openness could be a further intensification of controversy among many constituencies competing for resources in an institution, and for places in its entering class. We believe, however, that a lack of candor on this issue has created more damage than any effort to be forthcoming is likely to produce. It is imperative that colleges and universities have the conversation and come to a public agreement about the principles that define their learning communities and shape their freshmen classes. Higher education needs to get this story straight, and it needs to tell it out loud—for its own sake, as well as for those it serves.

No one except the president can provide the leadership needed to begin these explorations. At the same time, no president can expect a productive result without the help of others. A preliminary step must be to engage the leadership of two critical stakeholders as essential co-conveners of these dialogues: faculty and trustees. It is important that an institution's formal and informal academic leadership be involved as active participants in this process. The chief academic officer, faculty senate leadership, deans, and department chairs all have roles in helping to ensure the thoughtful engagement of an institution's faculty.

The crucial missing element on many college and university campuses has not been a discussion of athletics *per se*. What is missing is rather the articulation of institutional and educational values to provide a context for considering the role that athletics should play and the resources it should command.

Trustee leadership is also essential to the productivity of these dialogues and the success of their outcomes. No conversation of institutional values can occur without the presence and engagement of key trustees reflecting a range of insights at the table. The fact that the values affirmed from these discussions will help guide decisions about athletics' role makes trustee involvement especially important.

It is the faculty, president, and trustees who have ultimate responsibility for the values and direction of a higher education institution. As owners of the curriculum, faculty have primary authority in defining the content of the undergraduate educational experience. Trustees have fiduciary responsibility for an institution, exercising ultimate authority over the allocation of resources that make possible the fulfillment of an educational mission. Finally, it is the president who bridges these two domains, and it falls to the president to ensure that the table is not predisposed to a particular casting of institutional values either in favor or against athletics. Among faculty and trustees alike, there must be a range of thoughtful insight about the core values informing the educational mission and the roles that various curricular and co-curricular programs have in the education of undergraduates. In considering the educational values

that inform an institution's investment in athletics, it is important that the perspectives of coaches and athletes themselves be reflected in these exchanges among the faculty, president, and trustees. As members of the institutional community who would be affected by some parts of the values discussion, it is important that the views of coaches and athletes be taken into account.

Enlisting the front-end support and participation of faculty and trustee leaders will be critical to the success of these dialogues. We believe the specific means of advancing the process will vary with each campus, reflecting the particular culture of the institution itself. In all likelihood, however, meeting collectively and gaining the support of key faculty and trustees would be a common first step in planning that process.

At the outset it will be necessary for a president—and the institution as a whole—to commit themselves to the time a discussion of this kind requires. These are conversations that must take place over a period of time that allows key members of the community to participate. Making progress on these questions entails not just a decision to engage, but a commitment to a kind of engagement: a sustained, reflective dialogue that takes into account a range of perspectives. It requires of participants a capacity to listen as well as talk, to move beyond speechmaking and constituency politics, and to focus on the convergence of shared values. Managing a conversation of this sort may require that a president distinguish between a broad consensus and the convictions of a vocal minority that presumes to speak for the whole.

No one except the president can provide the leadership needed to begin these explorations. At the same time, no president can expect a productive result without the help of others. A preliminary step must be to engage the leadership of two critical stakeholders essentially as co-conveners of these dialogues: faculty and trustees.

One of the greatest challenges in convening such conversations is to convince its participants that the subject is real. Members of academic communities know all too well that conversations of this kind often fail to produce any substantive result. Presidents must signal to their campus communities that the values defined in this process will provide the basis for real decisions the institution makes in establishing its priorities and committing its resources. Beyond the conversation itself, a college or university must have the political will to act decisively if the discussions should point to the need for a change from current practices.

There are several attributes of the conversation required on college and university campuses. These dialogues must be:

- convened and managed by the institution's president;
- inclusive of all sectors of the campus community;
- focused on the purpose of defining core values that unite a campus;
- endowed with the political will to act on the values the institution defines; and
- undertaken in the context of a campus' own particular culture.

The conversations we have in mind must have the individual college or university as their primary focus. Each campus must define its fundamental values in the framework of its own culture and traditions. Again, what a president must seek from these discussions is not a decision about athletics in itself; the goal is to generate agreement on central institutional values that will in turn guide decisions made about the role of athletics as well as other programs and pursuits. While the discussion of institutional core values cannot in itself generate an action agenda, it becomes nonetheless the basis for the specific policy decisions an institution will make concerning its programs for undergraduate education.

Beyond Local Impact

On issues as pervasive and complex as these, change cannot occur unilaterally. Making progress will require a sustained, candid, open dialogue that takes into account changing circumstances in society, in the nature of athletic competition, and in higher education itself. It is the presidents of institutions that must convene and oversee these conversations, making sure they are productive and ultimately purposeful in yielding real results.

The decisions that institutions begin to make on the basis of their own core values must ultimately become the subject of presidential discussions within athletic leagues, conferences, and national organizations. There are two reasons for extending the scale of these discussions. First, while a single institution can make significant

headway in addressing the questions athletics helps to raise in its own setting, finding effective competitive solutions will depend on agreements with the schools against which it regularly competes—the other members of its conference. Second, a broad and permanent change in national culture is necessary to reduce backsliding pressure on individual institutions and conferences. Especially in the environments of selective institutions with high admissions standards, the larger challenge is to pose the questions in ways that can lead to a productive national dialogue—one that engages the issues surrounding athletics without the polarity and divisiveness that has characterized many exchanges of the recent past. In short, the core values discussions that should take place on individual campuses must become a model for other discussions convened in conferences, divisions, and other intercollegiate forums.

The decisions that institutions begin to make on the basis of their own core values must ultimately become the subject of presidential discussions within athletic leagues, conferences, and national organizations.

Within the broader domain of intercollegiate athletics, there are a few signs of a new willingness to talk about values and purposes as represented by the recent report by the NCAA, by the creation of a Division I-A Presidential Coalition for Athletics Reform, and by the formation of the Coalition on Intercollegiate Athletics (COIA), an effort associated with both the American Association of University Professors and the Association of Governing Boards. While these efforts are, to a remarkable extent, concerned with the narrow politics of Division 1A football—the Presidential Coalition, for example, may be as much about seeking greater access to the most remunerative post-season bowls as it about reform—they nonetheless signal a quickening of the debate and the involvement of campus entities outside the confines of the athletic department.

Here, however, our concern is not with the often troubled world of big-time college athletics. We believe that the kinds of institutions represented around our table—institutions that seek to build competitive athletic programs at institutions that practice selective admissions—must be prepared to convene campus-wide conversations of values and purpose whether or not others join in. At the same time we understand that it is neither likely nor, for that matter, desirable that all of these institutions reach the same decisions regarding core values and the relation of athletics to the educational mission. In the Patriot League, for example, it remains an open question whether or not member institutions should award athletic scholarships, and in which sports to award them. It is also worth bearing in mind the circumstances that led to the formation of the Ivy League in 1954—and the response to that decision within higher education generally. The eight private colleges and universities that formed this Conference collectively adopted a model of intercollegiate athletics that would strengthen their ability to maintain a fitting balance between students' responsibilities to academics and to athletics.

Both symbolically and strategically, it was an important step in the lives of these institutions, helping ensure academic control over athletics within their learning communities. The decision of these institutions, however, did not turn the tide of intercollegiate athletics nationwide. Within what would become Division IA universities in particular—largely public institutions with much larger enrollments and state-wide constituencies and missions—athletics took a very different path. The fact that the earlier Ivy decision did not redefine the mainstream of collegiate athletics, however, cannot be a cause for complacence at this juncture. In a variety of ways, higher education—and society as a whole—look to selective institutions of this sort for models of leadership. We believe these institutions have not only the opportunity but also the responsibility to demonstrate the kinds of community engagement and commitment that can more clearly define the nature of academic community in the current age—and the role that intercollegiate athletics should play within those communities.

We believe these institutions have not just the opportunity but the responsibility to demonstrate the kinds of community engagement and commitment that can more clearly define the nature of academic community in the current age—and the role that intercollegiate athletics should play within those communities.

We believe intercollegiate athletics is an integral part of the undergraduate learning experience. More than ever before, however, colleges and universities must reaffirm that role by providing a foundation that more clearly links the presence of intercollegiate athletics to the purposes of the academy. To gain this perspective will require that these institutions come to terms, possibly as never before, with the impact that intercollegiate athletics has on their campus communities.

Most institutions have chosen not to take this journey, from an apprehension of how difficult and unpredictable it can be. Standard equipment for anyone beginning these explorations must include a willingness to understand the direct and indirect benefits athletics confers on an institution, as well as the powerful systems of meaning that arise—for students, faculty, coaches, alumni, trustees, and donors—around these teams and their contests. Equally important is a willingness to obtain an objective measure of the price that athletics exacts in return for the benefits it confers on an institution and its educational mission.

The prospect is daunting, but the benefits of succeeding more than justify the risk. At stake is nothing less than the necessity of reaffirming—and in some cases, reintroducing—the positive values associated with participation in intercollegiate sports. Institutions that succeed in this venture will take pride in athletics in ways that have become difficult to do today—and their student-athletes will compete in the full assurance that they are both respected and valued members of a learning community.

At stake is nothing less than the necessity of reaffirming—and in some cases, reintroducing—the positive values associated with participation in intercollegiate sports.

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The essay, "When Values Matter," is based on a National Roundtable on Intercollegiate Athletics and Selective Admissions, convened at the University of Pennsylvania in February 2003. The following individuals were participants in the roundtable and helped shape the essay that appears in this issue of Policy Perspectives.

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Introducing

The Learning Alliance for Higher Education

Expertise in Support of Mission-Centered Institutions

It is an insight seldom proclaimed but quietly understood in the candor of any college or university leadership group: "No margin, no mission."

However great the intrinsic value of higher education's societal missions, succeeding in those purposes requires both strategy and a stable financial ledger. In tough times institutional mission can too often play second chair to the revenue stream. Market success becomes the goal in itself rather than the instrument of fulfilling public purpose. The academic community is being fractured into a collection of semi-autonomous business units, each adept at securing its own funds to pursue its own agenda.

Ten organizations have come together to form The Learning Alliance for Higher Education as a possible answer to this conundrum. The Alliance aims to strike the balance between academic pursuits and the realities of the market by coupling the academic community's traditional leadership skills with the kind of expertise that focuses on markets, technology, and management practices.

The Learning Alliance, launched by the University of Pennsylvania, builds on the research insights of three higher education research centers: Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and the University of Pennsylvania. It includes four major organizations that have focused on public policy and institutional practice, as well as three for-profit enterprises.

Joining institutions have rapid access to more than 60 experts on the staffs of the organizations plus an additional 30 outside specialists. Our assumption is that if the expertise we provide helps on the management side of the equation, the institutions and their leadership will increase both their human and financial investments in programs that pursue their academic missions.

The service builds strong personal relationships through frank and candid telephone conversations. When a senior leader at a subscribing institution has a problem, he or she gets on the phone and begins working with a seasoned professional skilled in the issues confronting that institution.

The realities of diminished resources have dominated many of our initial calls: strategies for staff reductions, for expanding entrepreneurial income without distorting the institution's mission, and for finding alternate sources for financing new buildings when public bonding authority is no longer available. Other questions reflect more traditional concerns: the launching of an effective strategic planning process, the remaking of academic governance, and the integration of new modes of learning and technology.

So far 40 institutions, large and small, public and private, have signed up. What made them willing experimenters was the possibility of making better, more timely decisions. From the perspective of The Learning Alliance, however, neither better market decisions nor improved management practices will prove sufficient. The ultimate test is whether subscribing institutions learn to use the funds derived from being market smart as the financial wherewithal for remaining mission centered.

To learn more:

See our Web site:
http://www.thelearningalliance.info/

Call The Learning Alliance:
(610) 399-6601

Send e-mail to a Learning Alliance Associate:
rmorgan@thelearningalliance.info

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Policy Perspectives in Transition

". . . Of what is past, or passing, or to come."

That well-known coda of William Butler Yeats' "Sailing to Byzantium" provides a fitting frame for a transition that *Policy Perspectives*—and its readers—must make together. Yeats's poem conveys a theme that recurs through the history of human civilization and in every culture—of coming full circle, and of finding new beginnings in what is passing.

This is the last issue of *Policy Perspectives* to be published under the auspices of the Knight Collaborative. In the future, *Policy Perspectives* becomes a publication of The Learning Alliance for Higher Education: a set of organizations that share a commitment to helping higher education institutions remain focused on the fulfillment of public purpose through strategic initiative (see description on page 11).

Policy Perspectives will continue to provide soundings of critical issues in higher education—derived in part from formal research and analysis, and in part from the data of human experience, as tested and refined through the workings of national roundtables.

In its first ten years *Policy Perspectives* was the voice of the Pew Higher Education Roundtable. Then in September 1998 we announced the formation of the Knight Collaborative, with major support from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. As we move to a third phase of activity, we acknowledge debts of gratitude to Hodding Carter and Penny McPhee, President and Vice President respectively of the Knight Foundation; and a special thank you to Rick Love, who saw the potential of a program focused on sustained collaborative activity among colleges and universities. Rick's encouragement and advocacy played a pivotal role in bringing the Knight Collaborative into existence.

Through the years many issues of *Policy Perspectives* have resulted from partnerships with other organizations that have worked with the Knight Collaborative to identify key issues, convene a roundtable, and develop and publish an essay based on a roundtable's central themes. *Policy Perspectives* will continue to foster intellectual and financial partnerships with other organizations to explore issues of central importance to higher education institutions.

A final note: With this issue, *Policy Perspectives* enters a transformation not just in the means but in the mode of publication. This is the last issue of *Policy Perspectives* in which "publication" will be understood as the printing and distribution of paper copies to our 22,000 readers. From this time forward, all of those who receive this publication will do so in the form of an e-mail with a URL link to a PDF file that can be downloaded and printed from your own computer.

In order to continue receiving* Policy Perspectives, *it is necessary for you to send your e-mail contact information to the Learning Alliance!

Please take a minute to send us your e-mail address by any one of the following means:

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  Call the Learning Alliance at 610-399-6601

Taking any one of these simple steps will ensure that you remain conversant with *Policy Perspectives* and the issues it addresses in a voice widely known as a bellwether of change in higher education—keeping you engaged in what is to come. We look forward to hearing from you.

—Robert Zemsky and Gregory Wegner

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